for those three regiments. We drew lots on that and of course the choice everybody wanted was the 1st Engineers. It was the first one to go overseas but we had nothing to do with that—we just drew lots and I was assigned to the 7th Engineers. We went out to Leavenworth and a company joined us from the border. I was with B Company in the 1st when the 1st came up from the border—another company came up from the border and formed the 2d Battalion of the 7th Engineers. We formed the 1st Battalion from B Company, 1st Engineers.

Q: I see, so the 7th Engineers was actually born out of the 1st Engineers through the drawing of lots?

A: The 1st Engineers, the old 1st Engineers, formed three regiments.

France and Luxembourg

Q: That was in preparation for the war?

A: That was just after the war was declared and we went to Leavenworth, and we stayed out there and organized the 7th Engineers until we were ordered to France in March of 1918. I think we were ordered there in February. I know we were for I missed the birth of my first son. He was born in February but we were already on the way to the port of debarkation. So, I never saw him until he was a year and a half old. He was walking and talking when I came home. We went to France and the regiment was then split. Well, my company-the company I had—was assigned to the construction of the hospital at Rimaucourte, a base hospital.

Q: Rimaucourte, is that correct, sir?

A: Rimaucourte. What the hell is the name of that province? Anyway, it's up near the border. It was the Haute-Marne.

Q: The Belgium border.

A: Not the Belgium border—the German border. But I went to this place and our battalion was split and each company had a construction job. Two or three of them were on hospitals and some back in the advance sections of the SOS [Services of Supply]. We stayed there until we were mobilized for the St. Mihiel Offensive, and that was the first time we had heard shots. We'd gone over in the mountains before that. I had been shot at when I had gone on patrols out in the enemy lines several times; but I was a volunteer. It was just static warfare.

Q: I was interested that you mentioned that each Engineer unit had a separate construction job assigned.

A: Well, I was assigned after leaving Rimaucourte to the French Army, and I went up attached to the French. I stayed with them, oh, a little while, and then we were detached and the regiment came up. We were ahead of the regiment, but we went into the line up near St. Die—outside of St. Die. We had nothing there but trench warfare. We were in trenches all the time. All we did was patrol a little.

Q: Now, you mentioned that was volunteer. You weren't assigned to an infantry or line unit?

A: No, we went out there—to blow up some barbed wire or to do something like that. It was more just as an experience, and I went along. I wasn't supposed to go, but I was captain of the company and we only sent about a squad or so. But we did; we were up in the front line and we never had suffered any casualties. Remember, we got a couple of shellings that went on during that, but nobody was hurt. We were digging deep shelters most of the time—underground shelters—and that was what we were doing most of that period.

Q: Were you advising the infantry at that time?

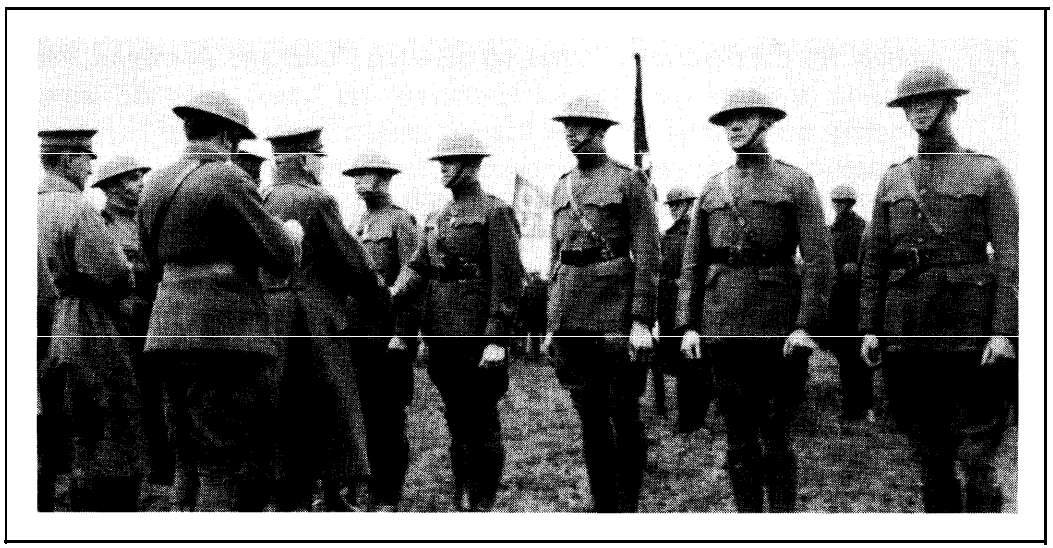
A: No, we weren't advising at all. We were doing the work. We were stringing barbed wire where we had to and putting up defenses. It was all defensive. Then we were mobilized for the St. Mihiel Offensive. And we got the regiment together then and went up into the St. Mihiel sector. I know I was behind the 6th Infantry at the time, and we did mostly

patrolling and opening up roads and so on. But we did do something out in front. We got shelled a little bit, but suffered no casualties-it was simple. I don't think we had any casualties during that period.

Then we moved over to the Meuse-Argonne sector after the Meuse-Argonne had started. We made our movements all by night, marched every night and bivouacked in the daytime. Part of it was by truck. Then later when we got closer up into the line, I had infantry combat for the first time. It was up between Cunel and Romagne, and my battalion captured the town of Romagne, for which later the Romagne cemetery was named. It's the biggest national cemetery in Europe. We did capture the town of Romagne. But we went across there. The infantry on our left—I've forgotten, I think it was the 33d Division—hadn't come up, so the brigade commander ordered us in. We were attached to the 10th Infantry Brigade, and the brigade commander ordered us up thereto cover that gap on the left of the 6th Infantry, which was wide open; and that's where I went in and that's when we captured the town of Romagne. Then the infantry pulled out, and we stayed there. Well, we did get ready for an attack or two. We did make an attack from that line later. That was vicious in there, very tough fighting. The Germans were pretty rough to go through. We did go in and had to carry small bridges up to cross a creek that was up there ahead of the infantry. We did that, but I got one of my best company commanders killed, lost not a great many men, and we stayed up there after the infantry. Well, no, we were pulled back. The regimental commander came up and protested the use of Engineers in that job, so he raised hell with the people. They were supposed to be doing something else. But General Malone was the brigade commander, and he was a crackerjack. He'd come over from the 2d Division; no, it was the 1st Division. He had been a regimental commander over there. He was a good one. He came to be my brigade commander. I was attached to his brigade most of the time. Then we pulled out of there and went over near Dun-sur-Meuse on the Meuse River. I went in at Brieulles and that's where we crossed by putting pontoon bridges across, opposite Brieulles. I think we had the first bridge across. Anyway, we got one across and we got some wagons across. We had to go across and get on a levee to get out of that hole.

Q: You had to cross the bridge?

A: We crossed that and then we came to a levee and we had to go up the levee for a distance until we could get off onto a road; it was very congested. We got across there. You see, I guess that's when I got a DSC [Distinguished Service Cross]. I got a DSC. I didn't get a DSM in the first war. I got a Silver Star in the St. Mihiel Offensive. I got the DSC in crossing the Meuse River.



General Pershing presents Hoge with the Distinguished Service Cross, 1919.

Q: That was the action putting up the bridge?

A: Yes, we had a French pontoon train. I remember that we couldn't talk to them, but we had practiced before that with this equipment so we knew how to work it. We'd practiced back in the woods.

Q: Did we have any US bridging thereat that time, or did you use all French equipment?

A: No, I don't think so. It was only French, but we had practiced back in the woods and they came up in the night. We went over to Brieulles, oh, I don't know, for a couple of days, a day or two, and the crossing was aborted. They couldn't get the infantry to go out ahead for cover. Actually, we put the foot bridges across for the infantry to go and then

stood in the water in this canal and river and held some of the little pontoon boats up with the infantry crossing over on top of them. And then we put in the wagon bridge. But we had no way out, it was all very congested on the levee and you only had one-way traffic for some distance. I remember the corps commander came down there. I tried to raise hell with him because he was going against our traffic and we only had one-way traffic. Everything would stop when he'd come down to see it. He came down on the far side.

Q: Let me ask about the doctrine of Engineer utilization then. You mentioned earlier that at St. Die when you were in the static warfare, you actually did the work of laying the barbed wire and digging the trenches and so forth. Was that the doctrine at that time—the Engineers did that—or were they to advise the infantry?

A: We mostly did it. The infantry had to do it when they—but we weren't building many trenches. They'd all been built—they'd been in use there for four years, a whole network of them. We went out and put up a little wire and we went out to destroy German wire once, but that was about all the warfare we saw in those times.

Q: Now, it's always of interest to try to convince people that all troops in the line are responsible for mine warfare and building fortifications.

A: I know, I've taught that business several times, but I didn't get very far. It isn't popular.

Q: No, that's usually the case.

A: That was taught at Leavenworth, but it's labor they don't like. Then, of course, the whole principle changed in the Second World War from long lines of trenches with communication trenches in between to nothing but foxholes. That was our type of construction during the Second World War. I was with the 7th Engineers all the time. I came back with it. I stayed with it from its organization until it was reorganized in the United States.

Q: At Fort Gordon?

A: Yes, but I had already been ordered to Kansas City at that time. I wasn't present actually, but there was nothing but a skeleton left because the men were discharged soon and I think it was less than company strength in the whole regiment after that.

Q: I think the Germans used gas warfare at Meuse-Argonne, didn't they?

A: Yes, we went through one of the gas attacks. I took my battalion through that time we went in as infantry. We had to wear gas masks. It wasn't much fun. I don't know how bad—there was gas around, no question about that; but we had to advance across open fields up towards the Cunel-Romagne line and there was gas in that. In fact, we had to wear gas masks, and we had it, I guess, throughout the war.

Q: I imagine that when you had it you didn't have much of a problem with gas discipline—or did you have much problem convincing the troops to take care of the masks?

A: Oh, I don't remember. We didn't experience a great deal of it because we were back generally-we were not in the front line. It was only when we got up forward that we worried about the gas. The damned gas alarms would start at one end of the line. They'd start blowing these sirens—gas, gas! And they would start 20 or 30 miles away and just go like a wave all along the front line. These sirens would blow and everybody would put on gas masks. Well, the gas was way off, but that's the way the thing would go.

Q: You know we always picture General John J. Pershing as sort of a personal-type leader; he got down to every level, every troop knew him, everybody in AEF seemed to know—

A: 1 don't think so. I never saw General Pershing but once. He gave me a DSC [Distinguished Service Cross] then after the war was over. He was tough. Tough old disciplinarian. He's a fine commander, I'm all for him, but he didn't get around.

Q: I guess it was just the reputation.

A: Yes, that's all hooey. He didn't do that because he was up at GHQ [General Headquarters], and we never saw him.

Q: He didn't get around the battlefield much then. You mentioned before that you initially were assigned directly or attached to the French.

A: When we started into the line, I was attached to a French division. It was all spread out. Our division was just arriving; the 5th Division was my American assignment. But they had just come over and were training and so on. We were sent up into the front line up in the Vosges Mountains to learn something about it, and that's the first time I ever saw an attack at night by one of these, what do they call it? Went out to capture prisoners and they put down barrages, box barrages; I did see that one from up on the hilltop.

Q: Was it a reconnaissance-in-force then to capture prisoners?

A: They were all in the line. They were not—except to get prisoners and find out what was going on. It was to capture prisoners. They did that quite often in those days. They'd send out these parties to capture the prisoners. They never were trying to take land. We stayed with them, oh, it wasn't too long. I don 't know whether I mentioned this before or not, but we were going in the line. In those days they paid the troops in cash on payday, and the officers paid them. Well, I was just behind the line—you couldn't cross until dark and I was in bivouac there behind this restraining line, and the colonel and the adjutant or somebody came up with my company payroll all in cash. And it was getting dark and I had to get rid of that damned money. I had to walk, carry this, and I couldn't carry that much cash and I didn't want to have it on me. So I got the company lined up just at twilight. I lined them up and everybody had to sign the payroll when they received their money. Well, then it started to rain. So I had a poncho held over me. I paid them, whole company in the half dark in the rain, and I got rid of everything but for one man. He was absent. And you know, I came back to the United States, I still had his pay. It wasn't much. It was only about five or six francs or something. I never did find out where he was, whether he was alive or not, and I don't know what ever happened to him. But when I came back

after the war was over, to the States, I took out some old clothes or something and I had his pay still in my pocket in those pants.

Q: Was the accounting as strict then that you had to turn that back into Finance and all that?

A: No, everybody forgot about that and I never turned it back. It wasn't worth a dollar. I don't know who he was or I don't remember anything about that. I don't think I ever could use it because it was French money in the United States. Anyway, that's one of those little incidents.

Q: What was the reaction to the French when you joined them?

A: Oh, they were very nice to us. They didn't understand us, and we didn't understand them. I know we got up there and we were supposed to build dugouts and so on, reinforce the French. We started to work as soon as we got there. We were very much interested in doing our part in the war, learning something about it. We started right to work. Well, I think we'd been up there about a day and it was Bastille Day. I didn't know anything about the 14th of July. We went to work on the 14th of July. That just put the French back on their heels. They couldn't understand that. They didn't know what we were doing. Then when we left the French and we started off on our own, we had to rejoin our division up a couple of sectors to the north and we had to march over. We were still—I guess we were behind the blackout line; anyway we had marched that day. We'd march always at night. Well, we got up close to the place where we were going into the line and we had breakfast and so on. We started up in plain daylight. I hadn't seen any Germans or German planes or anything, and if we did see one—once in a while a reconnaissance plane came over—when it did we'd stop and get off to the side of the road until after the plane had disappeared over the hill. We then went back and started marching again. Some Frenchman saw us from up in the line, and he was horrified. "These Americans, these crazy Americans, marching up there plastered. " Well, we finally got into our place up in the line, and I was called up to the regimental commander, or whatever he was, and was told a few things. Didn't know what the hell he was talking about, and it didn't mean anything to me. We were supposed to go to our place. That was just how much we knew.

Q: So you just marched right on up?

A: We just marched, and whenever the reconnaissance plane came over we'd stop and get off the road. We weren't shelled, so I guess it was all right.

Q: Just as long as you made it. When you left France, did you actually go to Camp Gordon at that time?

A: I never went to Camp Gordon because I left. I went on leave to see my wife and only son after we'd landed in New York. I got a leave and got over to see them. Had never seen the boy and I had, oh, about ten days' leave. In the meantime, I got orders to go to Kansas City, so I never went to Camp Gordon as I remember. I don't think so.

Kansas City and Virginia Military Institute

Q: You returned to New York, I believe, in July 1919. Is that right?

A: Let me see, seems to me it was about the first of August. I know it was the last of July or the first of August.

Q: And you only got ten days' leave?

A: Oh, yes. And I was lucky to get that. Very few people got it, but my regimental commander objected to that very much. He wanted to see his family, too. I won out for that much, and I got these few days off. And it was while I was on that leave that I got orders to Kansas City, and I went out there and stayed only a couple of months. Then I landed down in Lexington, Virginia, at VMI [Virginia Military Institute] the day before Armistice Day—I remember that—that was in 1919, I guess.

Q: You returned from Europe as a major.

A: I was a major.

Q: Let's see, I think you were promoted to captain in May of 1917.